

February 5, 2008

IDHS Announces Changes To Fire Course/Test Applications and Fire Officer Strategy and Tactics Reference Material

Fire Course and Testing Application Changes

The Indiana Department of Homeland Security, Division of Training announces online applications for fire courses and testing are now available. The Certification Section has been working hard to update and streamline these application processes to better serve the needs of fire instructors throughout the state. This new online process allows fire instructors to submit their course and testing applications directly from the IDHS web site at www.in.gov/dhs. The course application may be accessed from two locations on our site, on the LEFT side through CERTIFICATION, then FIRE CERTIFICATION, the application is the second item on the page. Or, more directly, in the upper RIGHT of the Home Page, in the brown ONLINE SERVICES box. The direct link to the application is: <https://oas.in.gov/hs/training/public/fireApp.do>.

This application, while allowing for online submission, serves the instructors of fire courses and examinations by IMMEDIATELY issuing a course / test number to the instructor. An electronic copy of the application will be sent to the e-mail of the instructor making the application. This confirmation will remove doubt for the instructor as to whether the Certification Section staff has received their application(s) or not.

The Certification Section will continue to accept paper applications over the next few weeks but as we make the “leap” from the sluggishness of paper to online, we will no longer be accepting paper course or test applications after **03/28/2008**. After that date all applications will need to be submitted using this website process. *Don't forget, the board rule requiring at least 15 days prior notice for testing applications still applies.*

You may direct questions you may have about filling out this application to Sam Steinhilber, Test Manager at: ssteinhilber@dhs.in.gov or 317-695-0467.

Fire Officer Strategy and Tactics Reference Material Changes

Based upon recommendations from many fire instructors, the reference materials and the test validation for the Fire Officer Strategy and Tactics certification have been updated. Effective **June 1, 2008**, the testing materials for the FOST certification will reference and be correlated to Strategic and Tactical Considerations on the Fireground, James P. Smith, 2nd Edition, Brady Publishing and also to the objectives found in the Board of Fire Fighter Personnel Standards and Education certification rules.

The FOST objectives are found in the board rule cite of 655 IAC 1-2.1-7.1. The validation committee has determined that 11 of the 55 objectives set forth by the board are ***not covered or disagree*** with the Smith text. Those objective numbers are: 5, 7, 12, 13, 15, 16, 30, 33, 52, 53 and 55. The objectives listed in 655 IAC 1-2.1-7.1(b) must follow the definitions found in the following section, 7.1(c).

The reference discrepancies are between the definitions found in section 7.1(c) and the Smith text. ***Instructors must be aware of these differences and tailor their lesson plan and instructional materials accordingly by using the definitions found in the rule.*** The BFFPSE will be addressing these differences in future rule revisions, but for now the instructor will need to make the differentiation for the students.

You may direct questions you may have about the FOST objectives and the differences to Sam Steinhilber, Test Manager at: ssteinhilber@dhs.in.gov or 317-695-0467.

IFSAC Payment Process Change

Effective immediately, the Certification Section will ***no longer accept cash payments*** for IFSAC certification applications. Payment ***must*** be by Money Order or Credit Card. ***Personal checks will not be accepted.*** Corporate and public safety agency checks will be accepted. The form required for credit card payment is available on the IDHS web site, on the Fire Certification web page.

Special Note to Instructors

The Certification Section has been working diligently to improve their customer service, their responsiveness, and their turn around time for the tests and certifications provided to the fire service. Last year we provided over 30,000 fire and EMS certifications. That is only the number of certifications; it is not the total number of tests and practical skills processed. Those numbers would push them to near the 40,000 mark. The number of fire certifications being processed has increased about 16% and is a “two-edged sword.” It is great that you are doing more training and more development of our Indiana firefighters. The other side of that blade is the increased demand and volume for our Certification Section staff.

We ask your help with some issues which will aid in more efficient and effective processing of your certification and testing materials:

☐ *Adhere to Submission Deadlines*

When an application for testing is submitted in less than the required 15 days required by board rules, the instructor places us in a very difficult position. We are either forced to say no and make the instructor reschedule the test or, we have to interrupt our processing to try to meet this request. This hurts the whole system and slows the processes for everything. Proctors returning tests weeks or even months late cause us to have to deal with phone calls from students looking for their certifications and requires additional work to match up information that may be quite old. Unfortunately, it is the students who suffer when we have to refuse to process the tests that are returned so late.

☐ *Application Completion Errors and Omissions*

Recently, we did a survey of all of the returned testing packets coming back for processing. We noted that in more than 40% of the packets there were errors that caused us to have to contact the Proctor or Instructor or Student so that it could be processed. The time it takes us to make phone calls or send emails is time that we could be processing your materials more quickly.

Missing information on the applications, missing answer sheets, missing skill information, missing signatures, etc. all add up to slow the system. You can help by double or triple checking the information before returning it to us to make sure all of the boxes have been completed, signatures affixed and required contents included.

☐ ***Give Students Realistic Expectations***

- Currently fire certifications are running 4-6 weeks for processing. Our goal is 3 weeks or less, but we need your help to get there. We are prioritizing the processing of Mandatory and FF 1/2 certifications over others so that the entry level firefighters can get to work more quickly.
- Discourage Phone Calls and Emails Too Soon
 - While we enjoy talking to you and your students, each minute we are on the phone or answering an email takes us away from processing your paperwork. Let students know how long it will most likely take.
- Point Students to the Web Site
 - Certifications will show up in our system and on our web site before they will appear in your mailbox. Have your students check there first.

☐ ***Be Familiar With Board Rules***

- Learn and understand the processes for certification and testing, for the process of variances and reciprocity, for the duties and responsibilities of the instructor, evaluator, and the proctor.
- Know the prerequisites associated with the course you are teaching. Students applying for certifications requiring prerequisites they do not have or that we do not have record of will not be granted that certification until the requirements are satisfied. Please make sure your students know that up front so they are not disappointed when they do not received their certification.

We do appreciate your efforts and dedication to public safety and want to support you the very best we can. Please share this information with your fellow instructors and training officers. You are encouraged to send any questions or suggestions for improvements in the services provided by the IDHS Training Division to Tony Pagano at tpagano@dhs.in.gov , or John Buckman at jbuckman@dhs.in.gov .

Train as if lives depend on it, because they do!

John M. Buckman III, CFOD

Branch Chief
Indiana Firefighter Training System
302 W. Washington Street Room E-208

Indianapolis, IN 46204

Direct 317-417-3695

Email jbuckman@dhs.in.gov

www.in.gov/dhs



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